

Landscape Elements

Front Yards

The majority of Norfolk front yards are composed of a few key elements ranging from canopy and ornamental trees, foundation plantings (including ornamental trees and shrubs), beds of flowering perennials and annuals, groundcover, expanses of grass lawns, and “hardscape” materials such as sidewalks, steps, low walls, fences, and driveways.

Due to the shallow depth of the front yards in nineteenth-century neighborhoods, canopy trees are not typical. However, extensive foundation planting and plots of green lawn edged with flowerbeds, brick or stone are common, as is the use of fencing, typically cast iron with or without brick piers. The distinct boundary between public and private—whether through a material change or vertical element is characteristic of this era.

The deeper front yards of the early twentieth-century neighborhoods allow the green lawn to become the base for a variety of planting beds, hedges, shrubs, and a mix of canopy and ornamental trees that frame the view of the house. The use of planting beds—whether groundcover, flowers, or low shrubbery—define the lawn as a “room.” Houses of this era are typically raised and many have large porches and stairs providing another transition area as one approaches the entrance.

The deep and wide green lawns of the front yards of post-war neighborhoods typically feature smaller scale landscape elements such as simple foundation plantings (typically low shrubbery with some flowering bushes) and an occasional small, ornamental tree.

Foundation Planting

Foundation planting varies from low, manicured evergreens to brightly colored flowering bushes, to groundcover. All “ground” the house to the front yard.

Sidewalk Edging

Sidewalk edge planting, which varies from ornamental grasses, to colorful perennials and textured groundcovers, enhances the entrance and guides visitors to many Norfolk houses, regardless of the era.

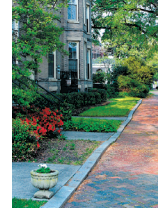
Hedges

Hedges are found throughout Norfolk, and have been used historically as a transition between the public realm of the sidewalk and the front lawn of the private lot as well as a definer between house lots.

Other definers of individual lots include any plant material such as ornamental grasses, low shrubbery, and even groundcover that is visually high enough to define the room of the front yard.



Early-twentieth-century neighborhood front yards



Nineteenth-century neighborhood front yards



A post-war neighborhood front yard



Foundation planting (post-war neighborhood)



Foundation plantings in early-twentieth-century neighborhoods



Foundation plantings (nineteenth-century neighborhoods)



Foundation planting (early-twentieth-century neighborhood)



A variety of sidewalk edging defines the entrance to the house



Hedges and gates define the front yard



Turn-of-the-century front yard



A variety of plantings define individual front yards